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COMMUNICATIONS

TO THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW:

Sir:

I ask the privilege of pointing out some of the incorrect statements and deductions made by the writer of the notice of my *Short History of Venice* in the REVIEW for October, 1905, pp. 132-135. Similar treatment of a work on American or English history might well go unnoticed, for we have a hundred experts in those fields who could judge between the reviewer and the author: but in Venetian history we have few experts, and were I to remain silent, your readers might infer that I accept the condemnation implied by your reviewer's strictures. A historian who has devoted years to his work cannot rest under the imputation of neglecting the elementary sources of material; especially when that imputation is made in the special organ of his fellow-workers in history.

As it would be impossible for you to print a detailed rebuttal, I shall limit myself to showing that on all the main questions I have the support of one or more of the recognized modern authorities. This will serve to dissipate the impression which he creates, that I am hopelessly wrong and alone on all points, while he is infallibly right and has the accepted opinion of every student of Venetian history behind him.

I. This is the paragraph from my history on which your reviewer first fastens: "So the year 452 stands as the date of the origin of Venice, although the old chroniclers, *with the suspicious precision of ignorance*, set March 25, 421, as the very day when, 'about noon,' the foundation stone of the city was laid. Their earlier date doubtless refers to an actual event—the sending from Padua of maritime tribunes to govern the settlers on the islands of Rivoalto, or Rialto; but to Attila's scourge we trace the decisive emigration from the mainland to the Lagoon out of which the Venetian Republic sprang" (p. 4).

To this statement, sufficiently guarded as it seems to me, your reviewer, omitting to quote the qualifying phrase which I have italicized, proceeds to say, what every student knows, that the document on which rests the story of the founding on March 25, 421, is a forgery; and he adds, "it is hard to see how the truth of an event of the fifth century can be inferred from a forged document of a much later period." It has apparently not occurred to him that tradition has also its place in any account of the obscure origins of states. A historian of ancient Rome who should omit the legend of Romulus, because as yet we have no baptismal record signed by the parish clerk, might be deemed over-scrupulous. The question to decide is, Did the Paduans at that early

period probably control the island settlements? Mr. Horatio F. Brown says: "There is little doubt that the document, as we have it, is a forgery; though it is highly probable that its substance is true to fact; and if it cannot be taken as establishing the date of the foundation of Venice, it is instructive for various reasons."¹ Professor Musatti—whose recent critical work your reviewer seems to have overlooked—says: "It is indeed true that Malamocco and Chioggia were subject to the jurisdiction of Padua, which had its boundary precisely at Rialto."²

II. Your reviewer continues: "Equally unfounded is the statement that Attila's invasion in 452 was the occasion of the foundation of an independent Venetian commonwealth." It will be observed that your reviewer, misusing my phrases "the origin of Venice" and "the decisive emigration from the mainland to the Lagoon out of which the Venetian Republic sprang", would have me appear to state that "an independent Venetian commonwealth" was founded in exactly 452. If a historian should write, "To the settlers at Jamestown in 1607 and at Plymouth in 1620 we trace the decisive emigration out of which the American republic sprang", I venture to say that no critic would care to object that the American republic did not come into existence until 1776. But your reviewer, by imposing on my words a rigidity which does not belong to them, argues therefrom that my brief account of the origin of Venice is erroneous.

As to the causal relation between Attila's invasion and the origin of Venice, many authorities might be quoted; I confine myself to three: Mr. Hodgson says: "The first beginnings of Venice are thus an incident in the history of Attila, the scourge of God, and he may in a sense be looked on as the founder of the city."³ Mr. Horatio Brown says: "Although the year 452 has no more claim than the year 421 to be reckoned as the precise date for the foundation of Venice, yet it undoubtedly marks the first great point in the development of the lagoon population into a separate state."⁴ Professor Musatti describes in some detail how the inhabitants of the mainland fled to the islands of the Lagoon, "and particularly to Rialto", and how Padua was thenceforth constrained to allow the islands to govern themselves. "Having become entirely independent [of Padua and the parent cities], the inhabitants of Maritime Venice were obliged to choose their own tribunes," etc.⁵

III. Your reviewer says: "There is no credible evidence that any city was founded at Rialto until centuries after 421." This is a peculiarly elusive misstatement of my position: I nowhere affirm that a city was founded at Rialto in 421. I do imply, on the other hand, that refugees settled on the islands of Rialto and on the neighboring islands during the invasion. On this point Brown, Musatti, Molmenti,

¹ H. F. Brown, *Venice* (London, 1893), 4.

² Eugenio Musatti, *La Storia Politica di Venezia* (Padua, 1897), 10.

³ F. C. Hodgson, *The Early History of Venice* (London, 1901), 17.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, 5.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 10-11.

Hodgkin, Hodgson, Hazlitt, and all modern authorities are agreed; and all the earlier historians, at least back to Andrea Dandolo (Muratori, *Rerum Ital. Scriptores*, XII.), held the same view.

IV. The next statement to which your reviewer objects is this: "During more than thirteen hundred years from the time when they [the island settlers] fled from Attila, they never submitted to domination from abroad, nor suffered a tyrant at home" (p. 4). Wrenched from its context, and from the qualifications of the succeeding forty pages, this statement is susceptible of misinterpretation. Your reviewer ought in fairness to have given my entire position: to have stated that later I am careful to use the phrase "virtual independence", as showing that, although for several centuries Venice was nominally dependent on the Eastern Empire, actually there is no record that a foreign envoy, governor, or other official ever dictated a single command in the Lagoon settlements, or that those settlements did not regulate their own affairs without foreign interference. If this does not constitute "virtual independence", in the sense in which I use these words, what does? Your reviewer's quotation from Procopius has long been known to scholars, but unfortunately it has not had the effect of clearing up doubts: on the contrary, opinions are still as divided as if it did not exist.

In regard to the nature of the influence of the Eastern Empire on the early Republic opinions vary greatly. Your reviewer, instead of saying, "Equally unfounded is the statement that Venice was never dependent upon Constantinople", ought, in candor, to have defined what he means by "dependent", and to have hinted that this is one of the ancient controversies among historians. Instead of that, he makes this bald assertion, and leaves the reader to infer that my position throughout is unsound and unsupported. The plan of my book did not permit controversial digressions; but from p. 12 or from such a note as that on p. 18 an open-minded reader may see that I had considered both sides of this question of dependence. In general I lean to the side of the Venetians rather than to that of the Byzantines, and in this I have the support of many eminent authorities. I quote only three: "From this account [of the Chronicle of Altinum], confirmed by later chronicles, it appears clear then that the first political relation of the Venetians toward the Empire was (like that previously with the Gothic kings of Italy) that of a protectorate rather than of subjection (*servitù*)."¹ "They recognized the emperor as overlord (*alto signore*); they bound themselves to the servile forms required by the haughty vanity of the eastern court; they accepted the general custom of heading their own acts with the name and year of the reigning Caesar; but they continued to rule themselves with their own laws, with their own magistrates; they made wars, concluded treaties—all things which they could not have done in a condition of subjection."² "Most readers will, I believe,

¹ Musatti, *op. cit.*, 8.

² S. Romanin, *Storia Documentata di Venezia* (Venice, 1853), I. 82.

think that Gfrörer has given this feature of the History [the dependence of Venice on the Eastern Empire] undue prominence.”¹

V. Your reviewer says (p. 134): “Mr. Thayer’s account of the growth of the Venetian state gives us little that is new, and there is a lack of distinction in bringing out the perspective of the great events.” These statements do not agree with those which have reached me during the past few months from the best living authorities in America and Italy on Venetian history, and from other historians and scholars.

VI. Your reviewer censures me for not explaining “as clearly as we should wish how the degenerate Romans . . . became transformed into the . . . masterful Venetians”. I do not explain for the very good reason that there is no sufficient evidence. Gfrörer (*Geschichte Venedigs*, Graz, 1872, p. 4), not to mention other writers, found the same blank.

VII. Your reviewer finds my account of the Council of Ten “quite misleading”. He says that “the political activity of that council was called forth (like the dictatorship in Rome) in emergencies,” etc. This is as correct as it would be to say that the British prime minister acts in time of war only. He extols the account of the Venetian constitution in the *Quarterly Review* as being “perhaps the best”. My own account was derived directly from the Venetian sources; I did not, in fact, read the *Quarterly Review* article until many months after writing my chapter, and I am therefore innocent of the imputation of plagiarism. One familiar with the Venetian sources on this point would hardly set a high value on the *Quarterly’s* article, which even in English is not to be compared, for instance, with Mr. Horatio Brown’s summary in his *Venetian Republic* (Temple Primer Series, 1902, pp. 98–118).

In conclusion let me remark that your reviewer has failed to give the reader a true idea of the general character of my book. One might infer, from his method, that I had produced a voluminous critical history, inviting controversy on the most minute verbal and textual matters. Instead of that, I have attempted in the course of 80,000 words to make a rapid narrative of the general course of Venetian development, and to interpret its significance. In this respect, the book might still have value, even were its account of the origins as absurd as a reader might gather from your reviewer’s opinions. Every scholar welcomes criticism which helps to correct errors: but is there, for a critic, a greater error than to apply to one species of historical writing methods of criticism which are appropriate only to a very different kind? What should we think of a critic who treated Mr. John Morley’s terse monograph on Voltaire by canons fitting for Professor David Masson’s six colossal volumes on Milton? Any historian, from Thucydides to Bryce, can be discredited by the method which your reviewer has applied to my book.

WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER.

¹ Hodgson, *op. cit.*, xviii.

TO THE MANAGING EDITOR:

It would be ungracious to question the justice of the criticism in the excellent (and flattering) review of the Library of Congress edition of the *Journals of the Continental Congress*, printed in the October issue of this REVIEW (XI. 170-172); but the point of view of the editor of the *Journals* may be of interest and perhaps offer some ground for introducing a better general system of treating such compilations. So many details are concerned in the preparation and printing of such a work that it is impossible to believe that serious errors have not been committed; and the most careful consideration may not have prevented technical blunders which reduce the utility of the volumes to the student. For all such errors the editor is responsible.

It was my original intention to include in each volume a list of the members of the Congress for the period covered by the volume. I soon concluded that such a list would be misleading. The times of the beginning and of the length of service differed in the different colonies and states, and vacancies were filled on various systems. A member might serve for only a part of his term, and the delegation from a colony in December might be very different from that in January of the same year. The usual manner of preparing such lists, *e. g.*, William C. Houston, 1779-1782, was apt to mislead, because there was no evidence when the actual service began or when it terminated. I saw the same difficulty in a single year's record, and believed that a simpler and more certain method was to leave to the investigator the task of determining the membership and attendance as should meet his particular needs. The means of doing this is to be found in the index. Is the delegation of a colony in question? Under each colony is a reference to the credentials of its representation, and the credentials give the precise conditions of appointment. Is an individual delegate needed? Under each name is given a reference to the credentials under which he acted, and mention of his attendance where particularly noted. Further, a list of the committees on which he serves will indicate in a general way his attendance from day to day, so far as that can be determined; and from his correspondence notes supplementing this record are taken. By these means his actual service can be traced and the incompleteness of a bald list of members obviated. The person consulting the volume can hardly go astray. In the volume for 1776 will be given a list of the "standing committees" as they existed from year to year, but I cannot believe that a list of the members of the Congress would be an addition.

The use of erased (or lined) type is to show the development of a paper in the process of composition or passage through Congress. The writer of a report will weigh his words and phrases, and the changes made are of value as they indicate the processes of his thought. His original propositions may be altered by others, or struck out, or displaced by amendments; and a comparison will mark the differences of opinion in committee or in Congress. The erased type permits the en-

tire paper to be given in an intelligible form without the awkward multiplication of brackets, parentheses, and notes, and without resorting to typographical vagaries which disfigure the page, when erasures of text and insertions are sought to be shown in cold type. Lined type was used in the *Writings* of Jefferson, Washington, Monroe, and Madison (Putnams), and I did not believe any explanation to be necessary. The selection of the year as a unit was to obviate a great multiplication of indexes. If 1776 require three volumes, there would be six volumes and six indexes, and with 1777, nine, in place of three and four as under the present scheme. A final volume, comprising a combined index to the series, will obviate in part the objection to the method adopted. An account of the papers or manuscripts themselves is reserved for the "Calendar of the Papers of the Continental Congress", now in preparation.

I shall welcome criticism and suggestion, as the opportunity presented by the liberal management of the Library of Congress for a final edition is not one to be wasted or impaired by an insistence on personal methods or individual prejudices.

WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD.